

2011

Batashewala Complex

CONSERVATION & LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

TASK:

- Securing the Batashewala Complex.
- Preparing a detailed conservation proposal for the conservation of Batashewala-Mughal tomb complex towards implementing conservation.

PURPOSE:

- Reversing the disfigurement of the historic character by the Bharat Scouts who occupied this area for several decades
- Conservation to ensure long term preservation and possible eventual inclusion of the complex within the extended boundaries of the Humayun's Tomb World Heritage Site
- To integrate with the Sunder Nursery site for seamless access by future visitors to Sunder Nursery.

ACTION TAKEN:

- Several years of effort by AKTC ensured that the land was transferred to the ASI allowing an opportunity to carry out urgently needed conservation and landscape restoration.
- Detailed architectural documentation, condition mapping and the landscaping proposal for the 17 acre complex has been prepared.
- Conservation Plan was approved by the Director General, ASI in early 2011. This was further discussed at Core Committee meetings.
- ASI carried out demolition of over 100 structures built by Bharat Scouts within the complex and used for carrying out illegal activities.
- Conservation works commenced in November 2011 with scientific clearance of earth to reveal the foundation of missing portions of the enclosure wall.
- The entire extent of the enclosure wall has been established though foundations in certain sections were missing as new structures were built over these, thus destroying even the foundations discovered at eight feet depth.
- The Outstanding Universal Value of the Humayun's Tomb World Heritage site is understood, amongst other factors, to be an ensemble of 16th century tomb-gardens. Thus the reconstruction of missing portions of the enclosure wall that defined the significance of the complex will enhance the historic character.



NEXT STEPS:

Conservation work now will start on the monuments and the enclosure wall

2012

BATASHEWALA ENCLOSURE

Standing north of the Humayun's Tomb-garden stands a 17 acre complex comprising two 16th century tomb-gardens. After persistent efforts of the project, the land was transferred to the Archaeological Survey of India allowing urgently needed conservation works to commence.

Reconstruction of collapsed portions of the enclosure wall as well as restoring the ornamentation - to the extent of available evidence - on the three monuments of national importance that stand here and landscaping the complex are some of the planned works over a three year period following which visitor access from the adjoining Sundar Nursery will be possible.

In keeping with the OUV of the World Heritage Site, within the buffer zone of which this structure stands, the conservation works aim at restoring the structural integrity as well as the original appearance of the structures.

As part of the larger project it is proposed to link the Batashewala Complex - Mughal tomb to the adjoining Humayun's Tomb complex and Sundar Nursery monuments, creating a heritage zone, of unmatched scale, value and visibility in the city of Delhi.

Humayun's Tomb ▼



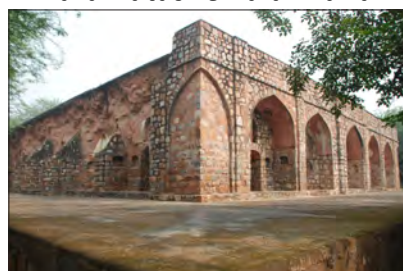
Unknown Mughal Tomb ►



Chota Batashewala Mahal ►



Bara Batashewala Mahal ▲



Batashewala Tomb - Garden : Proposed
Watercolour illustration by Himanish Das ▲

BATASHEWALA TOMB - GARDEN

Securing 17 Acres

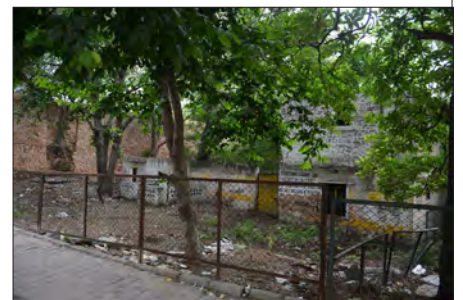
The Batashewala tomb-garden enclosure includes the centrally protected monuments of Bara Batashewala Mahal and the Chotta Batashewala Mahal yet the 12 acre complex was itself given in perpetuity to Bharat Scouts and Guides. Though this was on the condition that no commercial use was permitted, over 150 structures were built here, including by demolition of the enclosure walls and rampant misuse included setting up of a club here, building a college, providing space to tent-house owners to store material, etc.

ACTION TAKEN:

- On account of the illegal commercial activity rampant in the Batashewala complex, the Supreme Court Monitoring committee sealed the area.
- This followed by the L&DO re-entering the land and taking it in its possession.
- On the request of the ASI the land was transferred to the Archaeological Survey of India.
- Following court permission all structures built in 1989 for a six month duration were demolished including structures in use illegally.
- The ASI kept one shed like structure – used as a college – to house security personnel employed across Delhi for a period of almost one year. Later alternate structures were built for security guards and this structure converted to a project site office for the Urban Renewal project.
- The entire Batashewala area is now included within the Buffer Zone for the World Heritage Site.
- The ASI is now in the process of notifying as protected the entire 12 acre enclosure as the historic garden setting of the protected monuments.
- In 2008 an acre of land south of the adjoining unknown tomb was given to the Delhi Jal Board as temporary office for two years. This has now been vacated in November 2012 after prolonged persuasion.

NEXT STAGE:

- An LPG store on land transferred to the ASI in 2003 remains to be demolished and around it at least two encroachments have come up of squatters.
- ASI land has also been built upon by the BSF and repeated requests to fence this parcel of land have not been followed up.
- Similarly, the adjoining New Horizon school has encroached upon land transferred to ASI by the L&DO.



2013



CONSERVATION OF ENCLOSURE WALL

Archival photographs from the 20th century clearly show the complete extent of the garden enclosure walls of which only half the southern side had remained standing with most portions having been demolished in the 1980's when Bharat Scouts constructed almost a 100 'temporary' structures roofed with geodesic domes.

ACTION TAKEN:

- The Outstanding Universal Value of the Humayun's Tomb World Heritage site is understood, amongst other factors, to be an ensemble of 16th century Tomb-Gardens. The Batashewala complex stands within the Buffer Zone of the World Heritage Site. Thus the reconstruction of missing portions of the enclosure wall that defined the significance of the complex was considered necessary.
- Protection of the original context and boundaries of the complex along with the open spaces revive the original context of the Batashewala Complex. The protection of the whole complex and restoration of the historic and architectural character will strengthen the case for a potential World Heritage Site extension to include this land.
- Conservation works commenced in November 2011 with scientific clearance of earth to reveal the foundation of missing portions of the enclosure wall.
- Underpinning works were required on the southern enclosure wall of the Batashewala complex and masonry walls required to be built from a depth of 2 m.
- The entire extent of the enclosure wall has been established though foundations in certain sections were missing as new structures were built over these, thus destroying even the foundations – mostly discovered at eight feet depth.
- On the north-east corner of the enclosure wall of Batashewala Complex, a historic well was discovered.
- After proper de-silting to its original depth, the well is now conserved and enclosed within the enclosure.

*(Left) Restoration of decorative ceiling patterns and motifs in Mirza Muzaffar Hussain's Tomb,
(Above) Consolidation of the enclosure wall of the Batashewala Complex*

2014

Batashewala Complex

Standing to the north of the Humayun's Tomb World Heritage Site, the 11 acre "Batashewala Complex" includes two Mughal era tomb-garden enclosures within which stand three tombs, of national importance, and protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). The conservation effort supported by the US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, since 2011, has aimed at recovering the architectural integrity of the monuments. This has been achieved with the use of traditional materials and building techniques in order to replace 20th century alterations that were carried out with modern materials, such as cement.



Mirza Muzaffar Hussain's Tomb
Before conservation in 2010



Chota Batashewala
Before conservation in 2010



Mughal Tomb
Before conservation in 2010



Chota Batashewala

Within the enclosed garden and standing just east of the Mirza's tomb, the remnants of an octagonal tomb once stood. It is said to have been profusely ornamented and known as Chota Batashewala. Described in the 20th century texts as "...standing on a platform some 3 feet high. It consisted of a central octagonal chamber, with a surrounding arcade containing an arched opening on each of the eight sides. The central apartment was provided with four doorways, three of which were closed by stone jalli screens. The domed ceiling of the central chamber, as well as the walls inside, is ornamented by floral and geometrical patterns intermingled with Quranic inscriptions in incised plaster".

01: A vaulted tomb chamber was discovered and the earth in-fills placed inside were removed; 02: Architectural models created to understand the structure in detail; 03, 04 & 05: Restoration works on the structure as per the evidences, archival images found

Using archival images, the effort here has been to raise standing portions of the structure to complete just one portion of the facade in order to indicate to visitors the original scale and profile. A rubble masonry wall has been built all along the periphery to provide support to standing portions in lieu of the shallow foundations of the structure.



Chota Batashewala with Mughal Tomb
in the background

1930 A.D. ▲

1955 A.D. ►



The ASI protected monument known as Chota Batashewala, seems to have largely collapsed following the leveling of land, by Bharat Scouts and Guides, in its immediate setting in 1989 to build the structures for the Bharatiyam event. This as the structure seems to have had no foundations and with the leveling of the mound on which it stood all its foundations were exposed.



Action Taken:

- The remains on the site were found to be either raised or consolidated in cement concrete as past repair. It was also found that the entire surface area of the plinth was covered by 20 cm of cement concrete. The first conservation task was to remove all the cement concrete from the entire plinth and the remains of the walls of the tomb.
- During earthworks near the Chota Batasha, it was found that platform stood directly over the earth. The stabilization of the structure required a support from all the sides.
- To counter this problem, an earth mound is designed all around the structure which provides stability to the structure.
- The mound rises till 1M and has a 900 mm wide DQ masonry wall to a depth of 900 mm wrapping all around it.
- The remains found on the site were carefully studied and the details of the structure were discerned. On the basis of these remains, archival texts and images, the reconstruction proposal was made.
- Detailed drawings and model was made to understand the structure.
- As per the evidences and archival images found, it was decided that only the portions that were visible in the archival records will be reconstructed and the roofing system in the internal chamber will not be conjectured.
- Thus three bays have been partially reconstructed on the basis of archival photographs from the 1980's to allow visitors an understanding of this After receiving the approvals from the Archaeological survey of India to reconstruct collapsed portions, the conservations works started where the three bays out of eight are reconstructed.
- The works are now complete.



2015



Chota Batashewala

ACTION TAKEN:

Within the enclosed garden and standing just east of the Mirza's tomb, the remnants of an octagonal tomb once stood. It is said to have been profusely ornamented and known as Chota Batashewala. Described in the 20th century texts as “...standing on a platform some 3' high. It consisted of a central octagonal chamber, with a surrounding arcade containing an arched opening on each of the eight sides. The central apartment was provided with four doorways, three of which were closed by stone jalli screens. The domed ceiling of the central chamber, as well as the walls inside, is ornamented by floral and geometrical patterns intermingled with Quranic inscriptions in incised plaster”.

Using archival images, the effort here has been to raise standing portions of the structure to complete just one portion of the facade in order to indicate to visitors the original scale and profile. A rubble masonry wall has been built all along the periphery to provide support to standing portions in lieu of the shallow foundations of the structure. A vaulted tomb chamber was also discovered and the earth in-fill that had been placed inside was removed.



Using archival images, the effort here has been to raise standing portions of the structure to complete just one portion of the facade in order to indicate to visitors the original scale and profile.



Architectural models created to understand the structure in detail



Restoration works on the structure as per the evidences, archival images found